

EVALUATING PRINCIPALS

**Balancing accountability
with professional growth**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective principals are those who boost academic achievement for all students, increase the effectiveness of their teaching staffs, and consistently take leadership actions shown to improve outcomes for students. Therefore principal evaluation systems¹ should place 70% of their weight on the ability of principals to increase student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes, with the remaining 30% focused on their demonstration of effective practices and leadership actions. Local school systems should then use these assessments to drive not only key accountability decisions, but also to support professional learning and growth.

Currently, most principal evaluation systems tend to focus too much on the wrong things, lack clear performance standards, and lack rigor in both their design and attention to implementation (see, e.g., Reeves 2009; Goldring et al., 2010). Despite being a critical basis for determining who is an effective principal and for acting on those determinations, principal evaluation systems have simply not been a high priority for most states and local school systems. As a result, these systems do little to advance a powerful vision of principal effectiveness.²

This is very concerning because principal effectiveness is central to raising student achievement. Principal and teacher quality account for nearly 60% of a school's total impact on student achievement, and principals alone for a full

25% (Marzano et al., 2005). The principal's impact is so significant because of the leadership actions principals take to create the school-wide conditions that support student learning—especially those that directly influence teacher effectiveness, including hiring, professional development, evaluation, and retention or dismissal. Even in schools with high rates of students in poverty and students of color, many principals are leveraging these actions to lead dramatic gains in student achievement. However, schools and principals are not achieving these necessary results for our students at scale (Chenowith, 2007).

Bringing significant improvements in student achievement and teacher effectiveness to scale will require substantial improvements in the policies and practices that contribute to the effectiveness of principals. This is a large agenda for change and it can only succeed if we accurately and comprehensively measure the effectiveness of our principal corps. The goal of this paper is to provide policymakers with recommendations for the design and implementation of strong principal development and evaluation systems. States and local school systems that pursue these ideas can use principal evaluation to drive a powerful vision of principal effectiveness and, by consequence, improve outcomes for all students.

¹ Throughout this paper, we use the term “evaluation system” to refer to all components of a system by which principals are evaluated, including the underlying standards upon which judgments are made, the instruments used to assess performance, and other related tools and processes.

² For a more complete discussion of our definition of principal effectiveness, see our 2010 paper: *Principal Effectiveness: A New Principalship to Drive Student Achievement, Teacher Effectiveness, and School Turnarounds*, available at www.nlms.org/publications.

Four Ideas for Improving Principal Evaluation Systems

1. Make student outcomes and teacher effectiveness outcomes 70% of a principal's evaluation, and base the remaining 30% on the leadership actions shown to drive better results.

Principal evaluations should put student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes at the center of the process, weighting those outcomes heavily at 70%. The remaining 30% of the evaluation should focus on the principal leadership actions that have been shown to drive increases in student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

New Leaders for New Schools recommends that the 70% outcomes portion of a principal evaluation be further divided as follows:

- *Student Outcomes—50% of total.* For student assessment results and measures of college readiness, attainment (reaching targets such as proficiency) and growth (increases in the achievement of individual students over time) both matter. Principal evaluation systems should tilt toward growth in order to most accurately and fairly measure a principal's impact on the students he or she serves.
- *Teacher effectiveness—20% of total.* Principals should be evaluated by their success in increasing teacher effectiveness in two ways:
 - *Growth in the percentage of teachers under a principal's supervision who make "effective" gains in student achievement outcomes.* Tying teachers' gains in student achievement to principal effectiveness sends a powerful message about the principal's role in improving teacher effectiveness. It encourages principals to attend to the practice and results of all of their teachers for whom assessment data are available.
 - *Improvement in the "differential retention" of teachers who are evaluated as effective.* This measures the degree to which principals are successful at finding and keeping teachers who receive effective ratings for student achievement outcomes and on their own standards-based evaluations, and are successful in

exiting poor performers. Assessing principals on differential retention would incent principals to improve their hiring practices, their support for teachers, and their approach to evaluating teachers.

For the remaining 30% focused on principal actions, New Leaders for New Schools offers six domains of leadership actions that have been shown to drive results for students. These domains depart from the most prominent standards used by states and districts by placing greater emphasis on school culture (Domain 3) and teacher effectiveness (Domain 5).³

1. Vision for Results and Equity

The actions that principals take to articulate a vision, set high goals, and create an environment where all students thrive

2. Planning and Operations

The actions that principals take to diagnose the school's situation, develop and implement action plans, manage time and allocate resources in support of school goals

3. Culture

The actions that principals take to build a culture of high expectations, align adult behavior and systems with that culture, and engage families

4. Learning and Teaching

The actions that principals take to promote rigorous curriculum, high quality instructional practice, and the use of achievement data to drive improvement and interventions

5. Staff Development and Management

The actions that principals take to manage human capital, support the professional growth of staff, evaluate staff, and develop a leadership team

6. Personal Leadership and Growth

The actions that principals take to support organizational learning, maintain resolve and focus, find solutions in response to challenges, and communicate effectively

³ A complete rubric describing the specific actions a principal would take in these domains at four distinct levels of performance (and how a supervisor would know), is available at www.nlms.org/publications.

2. Base the evaluation of principal managers and other central office staff primarily on student outcomes and principal effectiveness, and give principal managers the tools and skills they need to effectively balance principal accountability with professional support and development.

Accountability for principals should be accompanied by results-oriented accountability for central office staff. Principal managers (i.e., those who supervise principals directly) should be held accountable for growth in student achievement in the schools they supervise, improvements in the effectiveness of the principals they manage, and a set of leadership actions (similar to the expectations for principals).

While principal effectiveness ratings should be used for a wide range of consequential actions, including selection of principal managers, compensation decisions, and dismissal of consistently ineffective principals, principal evaluation systems are only complete if they include a substantial investment in principals' professional growth. After all, for the vast majority of leaders in a school system, the purpose of evaluation is to support principals to reflect on their performance and identify what they need to do to reach the next level of performance. Principals specifically need their managers to make the evaluation process and expectations of performance clear, to craft tailored growth plans that address individual learning needs and serve as the basis for regular conversations, and to invest in ongoing, professional growth activities embedded in a robust professional learning community. The evaluation process should serve as a source of alignment and coherence across all of these activities. To provide these professional supports, many school systems may need to narrow the scope of principal managers' work and reduce the number of principals they manage.

3. Develop performance expectations that are universally high and differentiated in ways that drive continuous improvement.

Principal evaluation systems should hold very high expectations for all principals. At the same time, there are three ways in which the systems might usefully be differentiated:

- Novice principals require additional support for professional growth and school systems should consider placing more weight on the accomplishment of leadership actions and less weight on student achievement results than for other principals.
- The principal actions and indicators embedded in the evaluation system should be tailored to the *school level* to recognize key differences between elementary and secondary school leadership.
- Likewise, these actions and indicators should vary by the stage of school development. Though expectations remain high, a principal's actions should look quite different in persistently underperforming schools compared to those already at higher levels of performance.

4. Ensure that the evaluation system is informed by principals and other experts and is adapted over time to reflect new understandings of the practices that contribute to increased student achievement.

Based on our experience evaluating our own work, we believe that states can and should develop effective learning cycles, gathering data about the specific principal actions and school practices of schools making dramatic gains. Such information would not only be made available to school systems and schools to support their ongoing learning; it would also inform the design and periodic updating of principal evaluation systems.

Engaging principals, principal managers, and teachers in the design and implementation of a new principal evaluation system is an important part of this learning cycle. In addition to tapping their expertise, it recognizes that a new system calls for substantial changes in practice and culture. Principals, principal managers, and teachers should all be deeply engaged in designing, implementing, and revising new systems of evaluation.

Recommendations for Policymakers

Principal evaluation has traditionally been a local endeavor and should remain so. However, both the federal government and states can have important roles in fostering stronger evaluation systems. As they step up their involvement, they should guard against creating excessive bureaucracy and work to support the development of learning-centered school systems that hold everyone accountable for improving student achievement. All actions by policymakers should be focused on this goal, and it is in this spirit that New Leaders for New Schools offers recommendations to policymakers at all levels of government.

Federal government

Use core policymaking vehicles (especially Title II of ESEA) to promote principal effectiveness:

1. Reduce conflicting layers of accountability and ensure alignment of federal school-level and principal-level evaluation and accountability.
2. Align school accountability provisions in federal law to a new vision of principal effectiveness that includes a focus on increasing teacher effectiveness and improving student-level outcomes.
3. Require states, as a condition of receiving ESEA Title II funds, to adopt and implement principal evaluation systems that define principal effectiveness based on student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes (70%) and the leadership practices to accomplish those outcomes (30%).

Other recommendations for the federal government:

4. Require states, as a condition of receiving ESEA Title II funds, to regularly publish data on principal effectiveness.
5. Require states, as a condition of receiving ESEA Title II funds, to track the success of principal preparation and training programs in increasing principal effectiveness and to change or close those programs that are unsuccessful in doing so.
6. Set a goal for states to triple the amount of ESEA Title II funding used for principal development.

States

Create the conditions for local school systems to adopt enhanced principal evaluation systems and then build the capacity for successful implementation:

1. Revise existing leadership standards for principals to embrace student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes and to reflect the most current research on effective principal leadership.
2. Establish a model principal evaluation system that defines principal effectiveness based on student achievement and

teacher effectiveness outcomes (70%) and the leadership actions to accomplish those outcomes (30%).

3. Reduce conflicting layers of accountability and ensure alignment of state accountability for individual schools and principals.

4. Support ongoing improvement of principal evaluation systems through learning and innovation.

Other recommendations for states:

5. Increase state investments in principal development strategies that can demonstrate that they produce greater principal effectiveness.
6. Provide resources for districts to engage principals and others with relevant expertise in the development of new evaluation systems.
7. Ensure that state labor laws, education codes, and other systems support both the implementation of rigorous evaluation systems and the consequences that flow from them.
8. Create flexible tools so that local school systems do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Local school systems

Create the conditions for principal and teacher effectiveness through enhanced evaluation as well as broader, coherent strategies:

1. Adopt or create both leadership standards for principals and a principal evaluation system that define principal effectiveness based on student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes (70%) and the leadership actions to accomplish those outcomes (30%).
2. Align the evaluation of principal managers and central office staff to the new principal evaluation system. Include accountability for student outcomes, the effectiveness of any direct reports, and key work practices such as providing professional development and support.
3. Reduce conflicting layers of accountability and ensure alignment of local accountability for individual schools and principals.

Other recommendations for local school systems:

4. Invest in the professional development of principals and ensure that all such investments are tied to needs surfaced through principal evaluations.
5. Use principal effectiveness data to drive rewards and consequences for principals.
6. Embrace a revision of principal evaluation as a key element of a learning-focused agenda for the school system.

INTRODUCTION

Principal effectiveness is central to raising student achievement. Nearly 60% of a school's total impact on student achievement is attributable to principal and teacher effectiveness. Moreover, a comprehensive review of the research on school leadership found that the quality of the principal alone accounts for 25% of a school's impact on student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

Further, New Leaders for New Schools' analyses of publicly available student achievement data in our partner urban school systems show that schools are producing widely different outcomes. Some schools, including schools with high rates of students in poverty and students of color, are making dramatic gains in student achievement. While these schools and leaders demonstrate that success is possible, many others are not making comparable gains for students.

In researching these leaders, we have developed a keen understanding of the actions principals take to lead schools to higher levels of student achievement. We have learned that schools making breakthrough gains are led by principals who have carved out a radically new role for themselves as instructional leaders and human capital managers. The instructional leadership role of effective principals is well documented in research on the principalship. By contrast, the finding that effective leaders are those who do a good job as "human capital managers" (i.e., making smart hires, helping teachers improve their practice, and holding teachers accountable for excellent teaching) is a relatively new idea; it appears in our own analyses and it emerges as part of new research on principals as effective organizational leaders (see, e.g., Grissom and Loeb, 2009).

It is also an incredibly important idea, given an emerging national consensus that student success depends primarily on access to effective *teachers*. Principals, in their role as human capital managers, are gatekeepers in this equation. To ensure that all students have access to effective teachers, particularly low-income students and students of color, policymakers must ensure that their schools are led by effective principals who are able to hire, develop, and retain effective teachers and hold all teachers accountable for effective teaching.

The importance of the principalship is increasingly understood by policymakers at all levels of the American public education system. Nearly all states and most Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have adopted school leadership standards identifying what principals should know and be able to do. These standards often form the basis of policies related to principal licensure, training, and evaluation. Recent federal policy has likewise emphasized the need for states and LEAs to attend to principal effectiveness as a key strategy for improving student achievement. For example, through the Title I School Improvement Grant program, the federal government requires states and LEAs to replace principals in a large number of persistently low-performing schools.

Building on this momentum around the idea *that* principals matter, states and LEAs must become more precise in their understanding of *how* principals matter. In order to bring breakthrough achievement gains to scale, states and LEAs will need to pursue comprehensive strategies organized around a new vision of principal effectiveness.⁴ Such strategies must address a range of policy issues,

⁴ For a more complete discussion of our definition of principal effectiveness, see our 2009 paper: *Principal Effectiveness: A New Principalship to Drive Student Achievement, Teacher Effectiveness, and School Turnarounds*, available at www.nlms.org/publications.

including but not limited to the selection and training of aspiring principals, the professional growth of principals throughout their careers, and the authority and resources given to principals to support their effectiveness as leaders.

This is a large agenda for change and it can only succeed if we accurately and comprehensively measure the effectiveness of our principal corps. For this reason, policymakers should attend immediately to the design and implementation of new *principal evaluation systems*⁵ tied to a powerful vision of principal effectiveness. Implemented well, such evaluation systems will solidify our collective understanding of what constitutes effective leadership and will make visible the differential effectiveness of principals and the systems in which they work. Armed with those data, states can improve other principal effectiveness policies and practices, including professional development, placement, and compensation.

A large number of states and LEAs are dissatisfied with their current principal evaluation systems and are seeking assistance to develop new ones. Notably, in response to the Federal Race to the Top competition, numerous states have established processes for redesigning principal evaluation systems; those who are funded will need to make good on these promises and we hope that others will follow with bold reforms. At the district level, the increased attention to teacher evaluation systems (see, e.g., Weisberg et al., 2009) is beginning to be accompanied by efforts to revamp principal evaluation as well.

As states and LEAs consider how best to assess principal performance, they could draw on a wide variety of existing models. After all, it is standard practice in school districts to have a formal principal evaluation system. Unfortunately, these systems are plagued with problems and do little to

advance a powerful vision of principal effectiveness. Our goal in this paper is to begin to fill that void. Specifically, we aim to provide states and districts with recommendations for creating and implementing principal development and evaluation systems rooted in a bold vision for principal effectiveness.

In offering these recommendations for change, we hope that states and districts will follow a few basic principles in the design and implementation of evaluation systems. The first is to put the task of improving student outcomes at the center. Principals should be assessed primarily on whether they are successful in improving student achievement results and other critical student outcomes. The second principle is to highlight the role of principals in improving teacher effectiveness. Because boosting the effectiveness of their teaching corps is central to what effective principals do, principals should be judged on their success in increasing the percentage of effective teachers working on behalf of their students. The third principle is to commit to the ongoing professional growth of school leaders. While more rigorous evaluation will have substantial consequences for some principals (ranging from promotion to dismissal), the vast majority of principals should experience the system as driving their effectiveness and learning, helping them to adopt and perfect the practices of successful leaders.

The remainder of this paper is devoted to elaborating on these ideas. We begin by reviewing research and field knowledge on principal evaluation systems. Based on lessons from this review, we outline four characteristics of strong principal evaluation systems. We conclude by offering recommendations to states and districts on how to proceed with the design and implementation of such strong systems.

⁵ Throughout this paper, we use the term “evaluation system” to refer to all components of a system by which principals are evaluated, including the underlying standards upon which judgments are made, the instruments used to assess performance, and other related tools and processes.

KEY FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH AND THE FIELD

Research on principal evaluation systems is quite limited. There have been some recent surveys of evaluation systems and instruments that provide lessons for the field. Ellen Goldring and her colleagues (2009) examined the content and use of evaluation instruments for large urban districts and for districts and states participating in leadership initiatives for school improvement (in all, they had adequate documentation for 35 districts and 9 states). They identified which categories of principal leadership actions the instruments tended to emphasize and they analyzed the degree to which the instruments met basic standards (e.g., fairness, accuracy, etc.) for evaluation systems. Doug Reeves (2009) reviewed more than 300 principal evaluation instruments and surveyed 500 leaders from 21 states. His research investigated both the content of the evaluation instruments and the experience of leaders being evaluated in the context of their work. Finally, Learning Point Associates (Condon & Clifford, 2010) conducted a scan of available principal performance assessment tools, rating them on their validity and reliability.

These surveys and other available research, however, mostly address issues related to the design of evaluation systems and do not speak to their implementation. Since we are interested in providing comprehensive guidance to states and districts on both the design and the implementation of evaluation systems, we also investigated a number of

systems in operation at the local level. These sites were selected based on recommendations from experts in the field about where effective implementation was taking place. The following four observations are, therefore, drawn from both the research base and from practice in the field.

1. Principal evaluation systems tend not to focus enough on the right things.

First and foremost, it is uncommon for districts to directly tie principal evaluation ratings to student achievement outcomes or teacher effectiveness ratings (Reeves 2009). In addition, Goldring and her colleagues (2009) found that evaluation instruments most frequently assessed “general management,” along with several other categories of principal action: “implementing vision, relationship with parents and communities, data-based decisions, and communication skills.” By contrast, “the critical behaviors that principals perform to influence student achievement do not receive emphasis” in the vast majority of principal evaluation systems (Goldring et al., 2009, p. 34).⁶ Importantly, they also conclude that evaluation instruments measure too many categories of actions and therefore lack depth and focus. Our own analyses of effective principals confirm the need to narrow and deepen the focus on a small number of leadership practices, with particular attention to leadership in the domains of instruction, school culture, and human capital management.

⁶ These “critical behaviors” are described in their “learning-centered leadership” framework. Drawn from an extensive body of research on principal leadership, the framework consists of six core components of leadership (high standards for learning, rigorous curriculum, high quality instruction, culture of learning and professional behavior, connections to external communities, and systemic performance accountability) and six processes (planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating and monitoring) through which leaders accomplish work within the core components (Goldring et al., 2009). Though we contend that there are some content areas needing more or less weight than those emphasized in the “learning-centered leadership” framework, we agree with their general assessment of most evaluation systems.

VAL-ED

The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) was developed in 2006 and was more recently made available for commercial use following a national trial to measure its validity and reliability in assessing principal effectiveness. VAL-ED is a rating instrument designed to be administered to principals (for self-assessment), their managers, and the teachers they supervise. It assesses the behaviors of school leaders “known to directly influence teachers’ performance, and in turn students’ learning.” Specifically, it assesses six core components of leadership: (1) high standards for learning, (2) rigorous curriculum, (3) high quality instruction, (4) culture of learning and professional behavior, (5) connections to external communities, and (6) systemic performance accountability. It also measures six processes through which leaders

accomplish work within the six core components: planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating and monitoring.

Through the assessment of these behaviors, VAL-ED provides principals and their managers with a quantitative profile of each principal’s performance. The profile is intended to inform a range of activities, including summative evaluation of principals.

VAL-ED is unusual in the field of principal evaluation instruments for its rigorous field-testing in more than 300 schools and 60 districts. Based on this testing, the tool has a high level of validity and reliability, making it quite useful for districts and states wanting to employ its evidence for high stakes decisions (e.g., performance-based compensation). Indeed, demand has been high among states

and a growing number of districts since VAL-ED became commercially available just a year ago.

However, as a result of its recent introduction to the field, little is known about the implementation of VAL-ED as part of a full principal evaluation system. The designers of the tool are currently undertaking a study examining how real users of the tool employ it for high-stakes decisions, but findings will not be available for at least two years. Further study of VAL-ED should also illuminate connections between the instrument’s core components and student achievement. At present, data making those links are not available, though the tool is built on a well-established body of research on principal leadership.

2. Principal evaluation systems tend not to be based on clear performance standards.

Reeves’ review of evaluation documents identifies two prevailing problems: “Either the standards themselves were ambiguous or the performance expectations were unclear” (2009, p. 4). Likewise, Goldring and her colleagues find that “assessments of principals are conducted with no clear norms or performance standards” (p. 34). Though many states and districts have adopted specific leadership standards, it is often the case that the instruments used to evaluate principals do not adequately or specifically align to those standards. Having identified the weaknesses of most systems, Reeves contends that good evaluation systems have very clear definitions of performance levels and precise rubrics allowing evaluators to effectively measure aspects of performance.

3. Principal evaluation systems are limited in the rigor of their design.

The research speaks to this point primarily in relation to evaluation instruments. The Learning Point scan, for example, found that most available instruments for assessing principal performance have two problems (Condon & Clifford, 2010). First, they do not appear to have been tested for important psychometric properties, or at least there is not documentation to that effect. Second, they are at least a decade old and, therefore, are not constructed with the latest research on principal leadership in mind. Of the eight instruments that Learning Point judged, only one (the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education, or VAL-ED, which is discussed above) met high standards of content validity and reliability. Goldring

(2009) affirms this concern about the psychometric properties of available instruments.

4. Principal evaluation systems are limited in the rigor of their implementation.

Moving beyond instruments, Goldring (2009) offers a broader critique of evaluation systems: “There is little discussion of psychometric properties, evaluation procedures, or evaluator training among the sampled assessment instruments and procedures... There is little consistency in how assessments are developed, which leadership standards are used, and if the measures are reliable and valid” (p. 35). Building on this observation, we know from the field and from some case study research that principal evaluation systems often suffer from the same problems that have been documented about teacher evaluation: namely, that principals and their supervisors do not invest in evaluation as a tool for systematic improvement and learning. For example, Kimball and Milanowski (2009) studied the implementation of a standards-based principal evaluation system in one school district. They found that limited attention from top administrators and limited efforts to train principal managers on the use of evaluation tools resulted in weak implementation generally and disparate experiences among participants.

If principal evaluation systems are to become powerful mechanisms for improving student outcomes, these significant concerns—an insufficient emphasis on the right things, a lack of anchoring to performance standards, and a limited degree of rigor in design and implementation—need to be fundamentally addressed.

FOUR IDEAS FOR IMPROVING PRINCIPAL EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Based on our observations from research and practice, we offer four ideas for improving principal evaluation systems:

1. Make student outcomes and teacher effectiveness outcomes 70% of a principal's evaluation, and base the remaining 30% on the leadership actions shown to drive better results.
2. Base the evaluation of principal managers and other central office staff primarily on student outcomes and principal effectiveness, and give principal managers⁷ the tools and skills they need to effectively balance principal accountability with professional support and development.
3. Develop performance expectations that are universally high and differentiated in ways that drive continuous improvement.
4. Ensure that the evaluation system is informed by principals and other experts and is adapted over time to reflect new understandings of the practices that contribute to increased student achievement.

Idea 1: Make student outcomes and teacher effectiveness outcomes 70% of a principal's evaluation, and base the remaining 30% on the leadership actions shown to drive better results.

For most principals in American public schools, their effectiveness is measured primarily on the basis of their manager's assessment of their competence across several leadership standards. These standards are the characteristics deemed important and/or the actions that principals take to drive progress in student achievement. Less often, LEAs supplement the standards with direct measures of important outcomes, such as school climate surveys or student achievement results. Where these results are used in principal evaluations, they are usually only a small part of the determination of principal effectiveness.

We propose a dramatically different approach to assessing principal effectiveness, one that puts student achievement

and other important outcomes at the center of the evaluation process. Specifically, we propose that principals be evaluated against three standards: (1) Producing greater levels of success for all of their students, (2) Increasing the number and percentage of effective teachers on their staff, and (3) Executing critical leadership actions that drive student achievement.

We use the term "standards" in quite a different way than is common in the field of principal evaluation. Most evaluation systems are based on a set of standards that describe (in the best cases) principal actions that drive student achievement or (in many other cases) skills and traits that principals possess. In evaluating principals, these systems

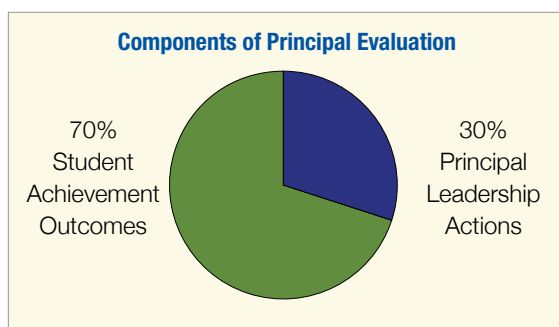
⁷ We use the term "principal managers" to refer to direct supervisors of principals (variously titled assistant superintendents, network leaders, executive officers, etc.).

NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS STANDARDS	TYPICAL STANDARDS (ISLLC) ⁸
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student achievement outcomes 2. Teacher effectiveness outcomes 3. Effective leadership actions in these domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision for Results and Equity • Planning and Operations • Culture • Learning and Teaching • Staff Development and Management • Personal Leadership and Growth 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning 2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth 3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment 4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources 5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner 6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context

measure effectiveness against the standards and then add in results. In our approach, the student outcomes themselves are the most critical performance standard for principals.

The difference between our approach and the typical approach to standards is illustrated above.

Across the three standards, we propose that 70% of a principal's evaluation should be based on his or her success in increasing student achievement (measured in terms of growth over time, attention to targeted groups of students, and preparation of students to succeed in college and career) and increasing teacher effectiveness. The remaining 30% should be based on evidence that he or she is taking effective leadership actions that are clearly linked to results for students.



Standard 1: Student Achievement Outcomes

Principals should be judged, first and foremost, on the success of all their students. This is more complicated than it might first appear, as there are many ways to measure success. At New Leaders for New Schools, we focus on

two sets of student achievement outcomes as the core measures of success:

1. *Assessment results in core academic subjects:* These include state-administered tests in English Language Arts, mathematics, and sometimes other academic subjects.
2. *Other academic measures of college readiness:* These measures are more prominent in high schools and include progression from grade to grade, credit accumulation, graduation rates by cohorts of students, the quality and rigor of high school diplomas, and rates of college acceptance and persistence. The specific measures will necessarily differ based on the data available in each state or LEA.

For both of these sets of measures, the current assessments provide valuable information about student learning and are appropriate measures of achievement at the school level. But they have limitations that have been well documented by researchers and practitioners. Fortunately, intensive and promising work is underway to specify better and fairer measures (e.g., the development of new assessments tied to the Common Core of Standards). We urge states to augment or replace current measures with new ones as they become available.

For the measures described above, both attainment and growth matter. Attainment refers to the accomplishment of identified targets (e.g., 100% of students meeting the proficiency standards on state assessments or graduating from high school prepared for college and career). Holding schools accountable to meeting such targets is central to a

⁸ Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, "Standards for School Leaders," 1996.

standards-based system, and keeping the targets high can incent schools to strive for excellence. Growth, meanwhile, refers to increases in the achievement of *individual* students over time, regardless of their starting point. By tracking how much each student improves from year to year, we can more accurately assess the impact of schools on student learning than if we just relied on the number of students reaching proficiency.

In general, principal evaluation systems should tilt toward growth. Specifically, they should heavily weight (1) the improvement of individual students over time on available assessments and (2) the movement of schools in the percentages of students progressing from grade to grade and graduating college and career ready. Further, evaluation systems should put particular emphasis on the growth of groups of students who have been traditionally underserved in public education—low-income students, students of color, and English language learners. We offer three reasons for this emphasis on growth measures:

1. They are the most precise measures of a principal's impact. With individual student growth measures, we can best assess how principals lead their schools to aggressively improve student outcomes from one point in time to the next.

2. They require attention to all students. Though standard measures of achievement focus on the number of students passing the line of proficiency (an important goal), growth measures incent principals to aim for aggressive gains for students well below proficiency and ongoing gains for students who have already demonstrated proficiency. By focusing on growth, we can fairly assess principals for supporting students at various starting points. Also, targeting traditionally underserved groups of students makes it less likely that principals can be judged effective without promoting growth for all students.

3. They are sensitive to the fact that schools have different starting points. For example, if a principal enters a high school with a very small percentage of students graduating on time and with the necessary preparation for post-secondary opportunities, significant positive growth in the graduation rate should be viewed as success even if there is still a need for further improvement.

In general, growth measures should constitute more than 50% of the student outcomes used to evaluate principals, with the remaining percentage devoted to attainment.

VALUE-ADDED MEASURES OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Value-added measures of student achievement are gaining popularity among states and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) concerned about accurately measuring a school's impact on student learning. Essentially, value-added measures compare a student's actual performance on a test against a prediction of performance that is estimated based on their prior test results. When the right data are available—multiple years of quantitative assessment data tracking students from year to year—they are highly sensitive measures that allow states and LEAs to determine whether schools are doing more or less for students than past performance would suggest.

The use of value-added data systems requires careful attention to several concerns raised by researchers and practitioners:

- Running value-added models requires tested data, which are limited in the early elementary grades and in high school grades. This can

make it challenging to look at student growth across whole schools.

- Value-added models are also best implemented when students can be randomly assigned, and this does not happen often in our schools. The lack of randomization can create biases in the potential make-up of classrooms and schools and impact how an entire school is evaluated.
- Critics of value-added methodologies also claim that there are other “noisy” measures of teacher effects on student achievement (e.g., the effect of LEA-level policies) that value-added methods do not take into account.

Also, in using value-added results, states and LEAs have an important choice to make: whether or not to control for student demographic factors (i.e., gender, race, FRPL status, ELL status, etc.). Because these factors often correlate with student performance, the research community tends to favor the

approach of controlling for these variables. Doing so allows states and LEAs to compare the results of groups of students who might historically struggle to perform. However, there is a danger that controlling for demographic factors will unnecessarily reinforce historic patterns of achievement. Though it might be helpful, for instance, for a principal to know how his or her African-American students are performing, these data can end up being used as an excuse to justify subpar performance and lower expectations for students who have historically underperformed. We urge states and LEAs to examine this issue carefully as they build out value-added assessment tools.

Weighing all of these considerations, we believe that states and LEAs should experiment with approaches that incorporate value-added results in combination with other measures of growth and attainment, adjusting the measures based on experience and as value-added measures are improved.

NEW YORK CITY PRINCIPAL EVALUATION PROCESS

Principals in New York City are evaluated based on several sources of data.

- Nearly a third (32%) of principal evaluation ratings are based on a school's graded progress. The progress reports measure a school's growth in academic performance (with additional weight placed on the improvement of groups of students targeted by the district), a school's absolute performance, and their school climate (e.g., attendance, satisfaction survey results). The growth measures make up 60% of a school's grade, while absolute performance and climate make up 25% and 15%, respectively.
- Another third (31%) of principal ratings stem from goals and objectives that principals set themselves, in consultation with their supervisors. Goals must focus on student achievement and principals are encouraged to use data from their progress reports as a basis for determining their goals.
- Compliance with district mandates and the provision of required services to targeted populations comprise 15% of principal ratings.
- The remaining fifth (22%) of principal ratings are based on School Quality Review (SQR)

reports. SQRs look at school practices that should be the result of principal actions to lead improvement. Principals are judged primarily on the absolute SQR score, and they are also recognized for showing improvement on the SQR from year to year.

In New York City, a School Quality Review is a two- or three-day visit by experienced educators to a school. The visit typically includes classroom observations, conversations with school leaders and stakeholders, and examinations of student work. New York City has developed a rubric to guide the visits and to determine how well organized a school is to educate its students. The rubric consists of five quality statements:

1. **Instructional and Organizational Coherence:** The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction, and organizational decisions.
2. **Gather and Analyze Data:** School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze, and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.
3. **Plan and Set Goals:** School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community

and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

4. **Align Capacity Building:** The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals and student learning and emotional needs.
5. **Monitor and Revise:** The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

Under each quality statement are four indicators against which schools are determined to be "well-developed" (the highest rating), "proficient," or "underdeveloped with proficient features." For example, the indicators under Instructional and Organizational Coherence include designing curriculum, developing instructional practices, making strategic decisions to support instructional goals, and maintaining a culture of trust that supports learning for everyone. In addition to ratings for each of these indicators, schools receive a nine-page narrative report describing strengths and areas for improvement.

Though the measures of growth will vary from place to place, value-added measures of individual student achievement should be used where available, as they provide the most sophisticated indications of principals' and teachers' contributions to student achievement. As with all growth measures, value-added data systems enable districts and states to acknowledge the impact of principals and teachers who serve students entering multiple grade levels behind their peers and who are able to move these students considerably in a year's time. Importantly, they also allow states and districts to determine whether principals and teachers increase student achievement more or less than would be expected based on what is known about the student population. Since tying a principal's evaluation to student achievement is a high-stakes affair, the value-added approach has the advantage of being fairer to principals than other ways of looking at student achievement, as long as enough data have been gathered to make accurate estimates of achievement. (See [page 15](#) for a discussion of value-added measures of student achievement.)

Both the specific measures of student success and the emphasis on growth will necessarily vary by school level.

At the elementary level, it is generally only possible to focus on growth from 3rd through 5th grade because of the availability of state assessment data. Given this, we suggest a higher weight on measures of attainment (e.g., percent of students meeting proficient or advanced on state assessments) to recognize the crucial early grades' work of moving students toward literacy by 4th grade. Also, given the critical role of early childhood education in preparing students for long-term success in school, we encourage states and districts to create tools to assess student progress in grades K–3.

At the middle school level, achievement data are available for all grades served, allowing a relatively strong emphasis on growth. Attainment measures should focus at least on algebra readiness as a core measure of college readiness.

High school measures are likely to vary widely among states and LEAs, given the diversity of graduation requirements (e.g., multiple diplomas, end-of-course exams). For all high school principals, though, student success cannot simply be viewed as an aggregation of test results. Rather, evaluation systems should include at least student

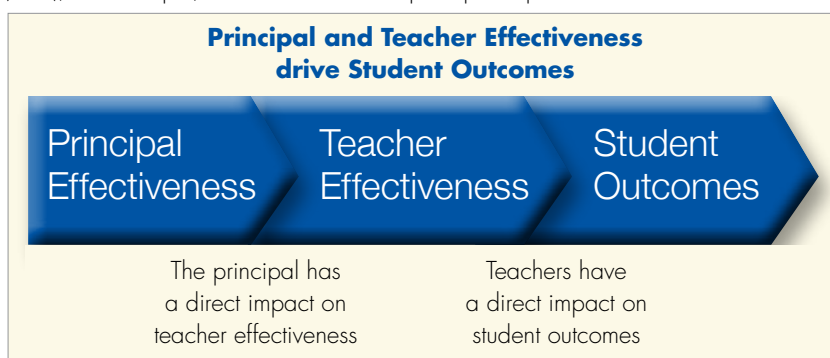
progression toward graduation. As assessments of college and career readiness become more widely available and more reliable, these can augment—and ultimately replace—other progression measures. The non-test measures of student progression can also be developed into value-added models that look at predicted versus actual credit earning and graduation for students, though we have not yet seen such a value-added system in practice.

Though we are not aware of any states that have attempted to tie principal evaluation directly to student results, there are some emerging models at the local level on which to draw. Chicago Public Schools (CPS), for example, uses a school performance calculator where schools receive points based on their state test scores and the distribution of their value-added growth scores. The student growth results factor into the evaluation of principals. In New York City, schools receive a letter grade that is weighted according to their student performance as measured by standardized tests, diplomas and graduation rates, student progress, and overall school environment. These grades, which heavily weight growth in student achievement (see [page 16](#)), constitute one-third of a principal's evaluation. We encourage states to look to the more sophisticated approaches to measuring student success as they develop new models to be used in principal evaluation systems. We also offer a caution that, in a principal evaluation system that puts student achievement at the center, any consequential decisions (e.g., advancement, pay, dismissal) should be based on two years of achievement data at a minimum. This will minimize the likelihood of principals being falsely identified as high- or low-performing and it removes incentives for principals to shoot for short-term gains at the expense of long-term improvement.

Finally, principal accountability for student achievement should mirror school accountability for student achievement. Whatever improvement and attainment targets are established for principal evaluation should also be the targets for school improvement and attainment. This will provide more clarity for principals and ensure that evaluation is a serious endeavor, not just an activity necessary for compliance.

Standard 2: Teacher Effectiveness Outcomes

Highly effective principals take deliberate steps to boost the effectiveness of their teaching force; in turn, improved teacher effectiveness produces higher levels of student learning. We view this as a straightforward and powerful set of relationships, as illustrated below. Therefore, in addition to using performance standards to evaluate principals on the actions they take to boost teacher effectiveness (see Standard 3 below), we propose that principals be evaluated based on their success in increasing teacher effectiveness. Specifically, we propose two core measures of principal impact on teacher effectiveness:



1. *Growth in the percentage of teachers under a principal's supervision who make "effective" gains in student achievement outcomes.*⁹ This measure deliberately puts more weight on student achievement, since measuring student outcomes directly and measuring increases in the percentage of teachers making gains in student outcomes get at the same underlying effect: a principal's impact on the quality of teaching available to his or her students. Because of this "doubling up" effect, it may be tempting to ignore this measure and instead increase the weight on school-wide student achievement outcomes. That would be a mistake. Tying teachers' gains in student achievement to principal effectiveness sends a powerful signal to all actors in the system. It demands that districts and states design and implement systems for measuring individual teachers' contributions to student achievement; and it encourages principals to attend to the practice and results of all of their teachers for whom assessment data are available.
2. *Improvement in the differential retention of teachers who are evaluated as effective.* This measures the degree to which principals are successful at finding and keeping teachers who receive effective ratings for student achievement outcomes and on their own standards-based

⁹ "Effective" teachers in this context are those rated as effective based on student outcomes, so the use of this measure depends on states and LEAs being able to track student outcomes at the teacher level and defining effectiveness in terms of improving student outcomes.

evaluations, and are successful in exiting poor performers. Including it would incent principals to improve their hiring practices, their support for teachers, and their approach to evaluating teachers. In addition, it has the advantage of focusing on all teachers, not just those in grades and subjects where state assessments are administered. At the same time, since it looks at teacher effectiveness ratings generated through teacher evaluation, its use is dependent on states and LEAs putting in place good teacher evaluation systems that effectively differentiate teacher effectiveness. Note that principals can only be judged against this measure if they are given a clear role in teacher hiring and organizing professional development for teachers at the school level.

Measuring teacher effectiveness in these ways requires careful attention to the fact that some changes in teacher effectiveness are beyond the control of principals. For example, adverse economic conditions produce layoffs that, based on tenure laws and collective bargaining agreements, result in the movement of teachers unrelated to their effectiveness. To avoid unfairly punishing principals for such changes, the evaluation system might allow principal managers to adjust a rating on teacher effectiveness to address extreme circumstances.¹⁰

In proposing to assess principals based on their success in increasing teacher effectiveness, we enter uncharted territory. Though some states and LEAs are contemplating connections between principal effectiveness and teacher effectiveness, we have not identified any systems of principal evaluation that directly measure teacher effectiveness. This is, in part, because measuring teacher effectiveness is anything but straightforward. Fortunately, a number of promising efforts are underway throughout the nation to develop robust definitions and measures of teacher effectiveness. Therefore, we encourage states and LEAs to begin with the measures described above and, as our understanding of teacher effectiveness comes into ever-sharpening focus, to effectively integrate new lessons from research and practice into the design and implementation of principal evaluation systems.

Standard 3: Principal Leadership Actions

Nearly every system of principal evaluation is, on paper, based on a set of competencies, often called “standards.” These are the characteristics deemed important and/or the actions that principals take to drive progress in student achievement. To be sure, there is no consensus among states and districts about what competencies to include in evaluating principals. The field is, at best, a hodgepodge (Goldring et al., 2009; Reeves 2009).

One common weakness of existing evaluation systems is that they focus on the attained knowledge or traits of principals (Goldring et al., 2009). It is terribly difficult to measure traits and, further, the connections between such traits and important outcomes such as student achievement are questionable. Instead, evaluation systems should focus on the *behaviors and actions* that leaders take to drive teacher effectiveness and student achievement outcomes. This emphasis is at the heart of *The Urban Excellence Framework™ (UEF)*, which links the leadership actions of highly effective leaders to improved outcomes.¹¹

There is one important national set of standards that embraces this focus on behaviors and actions, and which is comprehensive and research-based: the Interstate School Leaders’ Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. To date, 40 states and numerous LEAs have adopted the ISLLC standards as a guide to their policy-making. ISLLC also developed specific principal performance expectations across a range of leadership competencies that can be used for principal evaluation systems. (See [page 19](#) for a description of the ISLLC standards.) The ISLLC standards represent a significant step forward for the assessment of principals. Through their widespread adoption, many states and LEAs are committing to view the performance of principals through the prism of behaviors and actions.

However, the ISLLC standards and performance expectations are not a comprehensive guide to states and LEAs in assessing principal effectiveness toward the goal of transformative change. The analyses we have conducted to develop the *UEF* identify several areas which require greater focus in any set of standards that form the basis for principal evaluation. Two domains of leadership actions need greater emphasis than they receive in the ISLLC standards: culture and teacher effectiveness.

¹⁰ We note that many circumstances that are out of the control of principals relate to policies and practices that states and LEAs can and should improve, separate from their efforts to change principal evaluation systems.

¹¹ New Leaders for New Schools developed the *UEF* to define key leadership actions taken by highly effective principals to drive student learning outcomes and teacher effectiveness. Over the past three years, we have built an evidence-based framework rooted in data from over 70 site visits comparing incremental and breakthrough-gaining urban public schools in 10 cities across the country as well as a comprehensive review of the existing research. For more information on the *UEF*, visit www.nlins.org/publications.

THE ISLLC STANDARDS

In the mid-1990s, representatives from states and national professional associations collaborated to create the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) published the ISLLC Standards in 1996. Over the next decade the number of states using the ISLLC Standards as a basis for designing their own leadership standards increased steadily to more than 80% of states.

Twelve years later, CCSSO and its partners revised the standards (CCSSO, 2008) and published a companion document that translated the standards into six operational performance expectations for leaders (Sanders & Kearney, 2008):

1. Vision, Mission, and Goals: Education leaders ensure the achievement of all students by guiding the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning, strong organizational mission, and high expectations for every student.

2. Teaching and Learning: Education leaders ensure achievement and success of all students by monitoring and continuously improving teaching and learning.

3. Managing Organizational Systems and Safety: Education leaders ensure the success of all students by managing organizational systems and resources for a safe, high-performing learning environment.

4. Collaborating with Families and Stakeholders: Education leaders ensure the success of all students by collaborating with families and stakeholders who represent diverse community interests and needs and mobilizing community resources that improve teaching and learning.

5. Ethics and Integrity: Education leaders ensure the success of all students by being ethical and acting with integrity.

6. The Education System: Education leaders ensure the success of all students by influencing interrelated systems of political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to advocate for their teachers' and students' needs.

Each of the performance expectations is divided into three "elements." For example, under Teaching and Learning, one element reads: "Improving achievement of all students requires all educators to know and use rigorous curriculum and effective instructional practices, individualized for success of every student." For each element, the performance expectations document usefully describes principal actions (defined as "indicators") aimed at improving student success. Returning to the example above, one indicator that a leader is meeting the performance expectation is that he or she "[d]evelops shared understanding of rigorous curriculum and standards-based instructional programs, working with teams to analyze student work, monitor student progress, and redesign curricular and instructional programs to meet diverse needs."

The 2008 revision of the ISLLC standards represents a significant effort to streamline the standards and to provide specific guidance on how states and local school systems might use them.

Culture: The actions that principals take to build a strong school culture are foundational and critical. Highly effective principals build a "work hard, get smart" culture throughout the school community. They insist on students having high aspirations for themselves and on adults demonstrating personal responsibility for improved student outcomes and for supporting students in reaching their goals. These principals ensure that every aspect of the school's work reinforces the messages, "school is important," "you can do it," "we're here to help," and "you and we are responsible for your success." They implement clear, consistent codes of student and adult conduct focused on positive learning behaviors and respect for self and others; this ensures that students know exactly what is expected of them and allows adults to build an age-appropriate curriculum that explicitly teaches students the skills they will need to meet expectations. Highly effective principals engage families in reinforcing these beliefs and supporting the success of their students. They also ensure that all staff welcome family members as essential members of the school community. Finally, principals reinforce all of these school culture norms by placing them at the core of the school's instructional strategy.

Aspects of culture are embedded in the ISLLC standards and performance expectations, but our analyses of effective principals suggest the need to make culture much more prominent in describing effective principal practice. Further, these activities are particularly important in schools in need of transformation, where the work involves replacing low expectations for students and toxic adult attitudes with a culture focused on success and learning.

Teacher Effectiveness: The actions principals take to increase teacher effectiveness are distinguishing features of schools driving higher levels of student achievement. These actions include teacher recruiting, hiring, and placement, creating systems for teacher professional growth and evaluation, building leadership teams, and nurturing teacher-leaders. Highly effective principals conduct or ensure at least bi-weekly observations for all teachers, create individualized professional development plans, and support growth through direct feedback and job-embedded professional learning; their commitment to teacher learning is comprehensive and central to their strategy of improvement. They recruit, select, and evaluate teachers based on high standards, rewarding top performers and dismissing or counseling out teachers who persistently cannot or will not meet expectations. They develop individual teachers' leadership capacity and, over

time, build philosophically aligned leadership teams with genuine responsibility for guiding the core work of the school.

Aspects of teacher effectiveness are in the ISLLC standards and performance expectations, but they merit a much stronger focus, particularly given the singular impact of teacher effectiveness on student achievement results. In making this assessment, we are influenced by an emerging understanding of principals as human capital managers. In the private sector, middle managers play critical roles in recruiting, selecting, inducting, developing and managing human capital within their organizations; and, importantly, they are evaluated based on their success in this domain of work. Though some districts have begun to take human capital management more seriously, it is not yet common for principals to be held accountable for this critical domain of action (Milanowski & Kimball, 2010).

New research also links principal actions as organizational leaders to improved student achievement. Two studies of principals in Miami (FL) schools suggest that the schools that made the biggest impact on improving student outcomes were led by principals who spent more time setting the organizational context for a focus on instruction (rather than spending more time directly coaching teachers on their practice and other activities generally considered under the domain of “instructional leadership”) and who reported themselves to be strong at organizational leadership (Hornig et al., 2009; Grissom and Loeb, 2009). Though not definitive, these research findings mirror our *UEF* analyses; since a large part of organizational leadership is the management of human capital, evaluation systems should emphasize this aspect of a principal’s work.

At the same time, we do not mean to suggest less of a focus on instructional leadership, which is emphasized in the ISLLC standards. Indeed, in schools making breakthrough achievement gains, and especially in turnaround schools, highly effective principals ensure that the curriculum and instruction are aligned to standards for college and career readiness. They develop teachers around a coherent set of instructional strategies. Students know that they will be held to similar expectations in every classroom, and teachers know that meaningful student learning data is the foundation for all lesson planning, teacher team meetings, professional development, and a robust pyramid of academic interventions for struggling students.

In the interest of maintaining focus on the leadership practices with the highest potential to drive student achievement, we suggest that two domains of leadership common to the ISLLC standards and other standards frameworks be addressed in other ways. The first is *connecting principals*

to the broader professional and policy community. While the ISLLC standards highlight the role of principals in these broader communities, we emphasize the actions that principals take in their own schools to drive higher student achievement. The second is *ethics*. Though New Leaders for New Schools insists on high ethical standards for principals, this is best identified as a non-negotiable condition of employment rather than as a standard with multiple acceptable levels of performance.

Finally, the ISLLC standards and other standards tend to be context-independent. That is, they identify a common set of actions that all principals should undertake regardless of school conditions. Our research and experience have shown that effective leadership actions in schools in need of transformation are often substantially different than effective leadership actions in other schools. While standards should remain high for all principals, indicators of successful leadership practice should be sufficiently nuanced to account for a school’s stage of development. (We discuss this in depth in the next section.)

Based on this analysis of existing standards and their implementation, we offer six domains of principal leadership actions that support transformative change and should therefore be included in principal evaluation systems:

1. Vision for Results and Equity

The actions that principals take to articulate a vision, set high goals, and create an environment where all students thrive

2. Planning and Operations

The actions that principals take to diagnose the school’s situation, develop and implement action plans, manage time and allocate resources in support of school goals

3. Culture

The actions that principals take to build a culture of high expectations, align adult behavior and systems with that culture, and engage families

4. Learning and Teaching

The actions that principals take to promote rigorous curriculum, high quality instructional practice, and the use of achievement data to drive improvement and interventions

5. Staff Development and Management

The actions that principals take to manage human capital, support the professional growth of staff, evaluate staff, and develop a leadership team

6. Personal Leadership and Growth

The actions that principals take to support organizational learning, maintain resolve and focus, find solutions in response to challenges, and communicate effectively

Within each of these domains we identify (1) *key levers*, or categories of actions that principals take to improve student achievement, (2) specific principal *actions*, and (3) *indicators* that principal actions have occurred. To illustrate the difference among these categories, consider the following example:

DOMAIN	KEY LEVER	ACTION	INDICATOR
Vision for Results and Equity	Leader builds and maintains a focus on ambitious student achievement goals	Leader creates and monitors disaggregated goals for student groups who have traditionally not been successful in the school	All teachers are aware of school and grade targets and have aligned individual targets for their students

Within the domain entitled “Vision for Results and Equity,” there are three key levers, one of which centers on maintaining a focus on ambitious goals. An effective leader takes several specific actions related to this lever. For example, he or she “creates and monitors disaggregated goals for student groups who have traditionally not been successful in the school.” Finally, someone evaluating a leader on their vision for results and equity should see specific evidence of the creation and monitoring of disaggregated goals. One such indicator is that “teachers are aware of school and grade targets and have aligned individual targets for their students.”

New Leaders for New Schools has also developed a rubric describing levels of performance against these domains of action. We agree with Reeves (2009) and others that four levels of performance are ideal for an evaluation system:

Exemplary: This describes leaders who both meet proficiency expectations and exceed them in ways that can be used as aspirational models for other leaders. Few leaders will achieve exemplary performance on any domain.

Proficient: This describes leaders who perform adequately. It should be common for leaders to reach proficient performance on all or most domains. (The action described in the example above is a proficient level descriptor.)

Progressing: This describes leaders who, though not yet proficient, demonstrate the willingness and capacity to become proficient. It will not be unusual for first-year leaders to be progressing in multiple domains; beyond the first year, the number of principals identified as progressing should be small.

Not Meeting Expectations: This describes leaders who lack the will and/or capacity to demonstrate acceptable levels of performance on the domains. While the trajectory of “progressing” and “proficient” leaders is upward toward the next level of performance, “not meeting expectations” signals a need for exit.

The complete New Leaders for New Schools standards for principal evaluation can be found in Appendix A. A sample from the performance rubric against the six domains of leadership actions can be found in Appendix B, and the full rubric is available at www.nlms.org/publications.

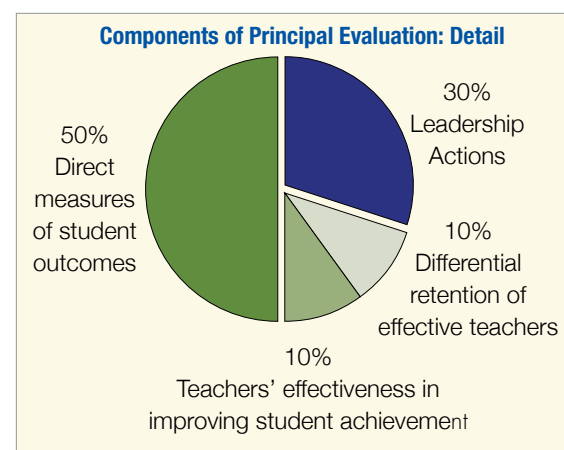
In summary, principals should be evaluated on the basis of their success in raising student achievement,

increasing teacher effectiveness, and undertaking important leadership actions. But how to balance these three standards of principal performance?

We propose that states and LEAs design principal evaluation systems with the following distribution:

- 50% direct measures of student outcomes, with a heavy emphasis on growth;
- 10% teachers’ effectiveness in improving student achievement;
- 10% differential retention of effective teachers; and
- 30% accomplishment of principal leadership actions.

This distribution makes improving student outcomes, measured directly and through the results of teachers, 60% of the total assessment of a principal’s effectiveness.



Seen another way, it ties 70% of a principal's evaluation to their results in improving student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes and 30% on the actions that have been shown to get those results. These percentages represent a tremendous shift toward viewing principal effectiveness through the prism of student and teacher success.

Finally, states and LEAs should leave room in new evaluation systems for innovation. As just one of many possible examples, there is ongoing research into the relationship

between student attitudes about their teachers and schools and their success in getting to and persisting in college. As these relationships become more clear and measurable, LEAs might include student feedback surveys in the principal evaluation process. Survey results could either serve as evidence for principal managers to use in assessing principals against the domains of leadership actions or, perhaps more powerfully, as a small stand-alone percentage of a principal's overall evaluation.

Idea 2: Base the evaluation of principal managers and other central office staff primarily on student outcomes and principal effectiveness, and give principal managers the tools and skills they need to effectively balance principal accountability with professional support and development.

In the current environment, significant numbers of public school principals face high levels of accountability for student performance. For example, in the Federal guidelines for Title I School Improvement Grants, all of the models for changing the conditions in very low-performing schools require the principal to be replaced. State and local accountability systems are, more and more, connecting the retention or removal of principals to student achievement results. Where the focus of accountability is on growth in student achievement as well as absolute results, these developments are positive and appropriate, since they highlight the need for our schools to be led by effective principals. Indeed, accountability for results should extend to all principals, not just those in the lowest-performing schools.

Once new evaluation systems provide adequate data on principal effectiveness, these data should be used for a wide range of consequential actions for principals. These include the selection of principals and principal managers, the placement of principals matching effectiveness ratings to school needs, principal compensation, and the dismissal of ineffective principals. Evaluation can and should be a source of alignment and coherence at the local level.

At the same time, accountability for principals should be accompanied by results-oriented accountability for central office staff. Emerging research (Honig et al, 2010) emphasizes the pivotal roles that central office leaders play in creating the conditions for improved student achievement. It is critical that multiple central office departments be organized to support principals and that they be held accountable for doing so through their own evaluation systems.

Within this broader view of central office accountability, it is particularly important that principal managers be held accountable for results and for the actions to get results in much the same way we propose for principals. Specifically, the evaluation of principal managers should be based on growth in student achievement in the schools they supervise, improvements in the effectiveness of the principals they manage, and a set of expectations for leadership actions (similar to the expectations for principals). As with principals, principal managers should be judged primarily on growth in student achievement. (We return to the role of principal managers a bit later in this section.)

Further, increased accountability for principals should be balanced in two ways: First, in exchange for accountability for results, effective principals should have more latitude in how they run their schools than they are typically afforded. They should have greater discretion over who teaches at their schools and over how they spend their limited resources.¹² Second, accountability should be paired with a commitment to the professional development of principals. Nowhere is this more important than in the design and implementation of an evaluation system, which should result in many more actions to support principals (e.g., professional development, mentoring, etc.) than actions to hold them accountable for their performance.

Evaluation systems are only complete if they include a substantial investment in principals' professional growth against the critical domains of leadership actions. After all, for the vast majority of leaders in a school system, the point of evaluation is to support principals to reflect on

¹² For more information on principal autonomy and relevant policy recommendations, please see our paper on principal effectiveness, accessible at www.nlms.org/publications.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY (MD) PROFESSIONAL GROWTH SYSTEM

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland has been recognized as a finalist for the Broad Prize for its success in boosting achievement for all students. A key aspect of MCPS's strategy is its professional growth system for employees. For principals, the Professional Growth System has five components:

1. Attracting and Recruiting: The district puts a premium on nurturing talent within the system, asking sitting principals to take responsibility for identifying talented individuals and giving them leadership opportunities that can build toward becoming an administrator.

2. Professional Development: Professional development of principals is based on the district's six leadership standards, which are adapted from the ISLLC standards. Novice principals receive a comprehensive grounding in the standards; veteran administrators who are between formal evaluation years craft a Professional Development Plan identifying an area of growth and a plan for addressing that area.

3. Mentoring: A wide array of district employees can take advantage of one-on-one and seminar-based mentoring. These include: novice administrators; administrators new to MCPS, new to a school level, or new to a central office position; aspiring principals; administrators seeking support through their Professional Development Plan; and administrators linked with mentors through the evaluation process.

4. Recognition: MCPS has a wide range of mechanisms for celebrating principals' success as leaders.

5. Evaluation: MCPS evaluates principals solely on their accomplishment of standards. The standards themselves are highly detailed and have been adapted over time to focus on practices that are linked to improved student achievement results in MCPS schools. The standards are differentiated for principals, assistant principals, and central office leaders. The process of evaluation occurs on a five-year cycle, with more frequent evaluation for novice principals, administrators changing roles, and principals needing improvement.

While these categories are common ones, what is notable about MCPS is the comprehensive and highly refined nature of the Professional Growth System. The leadership standards have been elaborated with an impressive level of detail and they are modified over time to capture effective practices leading to improved results for students. The forms used for Professional Development Plans and evaluations are narrative-intensive, requiring principals and their managers to be precise in their descriptions of areas needing improvement. The standards for central office managers (including the community superintendents who supervise principals) place a premium on the use of student data and other data to drive behavior. And, perhaps most importantly, MCPS devotes significant resources to professional growth including maintaining a corps of trained mentors to support principals at all stages of development.

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools (2008-2009). Administrative & Supervisory Professional Growth System Handbook. Rockville, MD. Accessed at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org.

their performance and to identify what they need to do to reach the next level of performance. To this end, the following supports for principals' professional growth need to be in place:

- Principal managers need to orient principals to the system of evaluation, its purpose, its processes, and the expectations of principals' participation. Evaluation activities should not come as a surprise and should not be reduced to compliance tasks.
- Principal managers should craft tailored and sophisticated growth plans that address the individual learning needs of each principal. Such plans should be based on multiple sources of data and should emphasize the areas of growth that will most impact a principal's effectiveness against the domains of leadership actions. They should be the basis for regular conversations between a principal and his or her manager. If possible, managers should provide a clear mid-year assessment of principal performance against each domain of leadership actions, taking into account up-to-date benchmark or interim assessment data. These progress updates can drive individualized coaching

and support for any principal not on track to meet standards. States and LEAs should guard against the requirement of growth plans becoming a new bureaucratic, paper-driven activity by looking to other school systems that have implemented such growth plans authentically and deeply (e.g., Montgomery County, MD, as described above).

- Principal managers need to invest in professional growth activities for principals tied to their growth plans. Activities might include coaching, mentoring, access to training on leadership practices, and opportunities to observe and reflect with master principals. A number of high-performing districts around the country have made tremendous strides in this respect, building robust professional growth systems for principals. (See above description of an exemplary system in Montgomery County, MD.) Since professional development is generally more effective when it is ongoing, connects to a leader's professional context, and affords the opportunity for reflection on practice, principal managers should focus on creating robust and well-supported professional learning communities for principals.

PERFORMANCE-BASED EVALUATION IN PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As part of a broader commitment to educator effectiveness, Pittsburgh Public Schools has developed a comprehensive school leadership accountability system called Pittsburgh Urban Leadership System for Excellence (PULSE). PULSE consists of six components: (1) a leadership academy for aspiring principals, (2) a two-year induction program for new principals, (3) ongoing professional development for school leaders, (4) mentoring and training of Executive Directors (Pittsburgh's name for administrators who supervise principals), (5) performance-based evaluation of principals, and (6) performance-based compensation.

At the heart of PULSE is a carefully crafted rubric identifying varying levels of performance against seven leadership standards. The standards, while specific to the Pittsburgh context, draw heavily on the ISLLC standards. The process for evaluating principals is consistent in the use of the rubric, but differs depending on a principal's length of service, with novice principals receiving more intensive support and more frequent evaluation than experienced principals who are meeting standards.

PULSE is notable for the explicit, formal attention paid to the training of the Executive Directors

and the specificity of the expectations for them regarding principal evaluation. Though there are only five individuals in this role, the system devotes significant time and effort to ensure that they understand the rubric and the process of principal evaluations and have tools to support the collection of evidence to support their ratings. Further, they undertake a process of establishing inter-rater reliability to increase the accuracy of principal ratings.

The emphasis on principal managers is not accidental. Indeed, there is an emerging understanding that principal managers play a central role in the growth and development of school leaders. These system leaders usually have an array of duties and are often stretched to provide adequate support and leadership to the principals under their charge. Their scope of work should be narrowed and refined to focus heavily on the development and evaluation of principals. Further, the number of principals that they manage should be lowered to levels that allow for this intensive focus.

In the context of a principal evaluation system, it is ultimately the clinical judgment of principal managers that should be the basis for the assessment of a principal's performance. As such, it is important that managers have a clear and common understanding of what effectiveness looks like and a robust array of tools with which to assess principals.

A clear and common understanding of what effectiveness looks like: One recent study of the implementation of a new principal evaluation system (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009) documented wide variation in principal managers' approach to evaluation, starting with their views of principal effectiveness. Such variation appears to be the norm and this is a substantial risk to the fairness and power of any evaluation system. Fortunately, many school districts have become much more rigorous in their processes for setting common expectations among principal managers in their work as supervisors of principals. Pittsburgh Public Schools, for example, has a robust process for gathering evidence of principal performance against a set of standards and norming the interpretations of that evidence by principal managers. (See above for a description of this process in the context of Pittsburgh's leadership development strategy.)

School districts can also adapt practices from corporate human capital systems. At Boeing, for example, senior

managers meet at least twice a year to hold comprehensive discussions of the performance of each manager's direct reports. This serves multiple functions, including calibrating ratings among managers, highlighting potential leaders within the organization, and strengthening the overall commitment to performance management throughout the organization.

A robust array of tools with which to assess principals:

It is an axiom of good evaluation that managers should base judgments of employees on multiple sources of evidence. While we do not offer a particular bundle of sources of evidence for principal managers to use in their assessment of principals, we do suggest some promising and useful options.

- Direct observation of leadership practice is essential. It is the principal manager's responsibility to build a culture of critically observing principal practice as a basis for evaluation and ongoing improvement. Master principals should be enlisted to undertake evaluative observations of other principals, much as some new teacher evaluation systems (e.g., in Washington DC Public Schools) augment principal observations with assessments by master teachers.
- Principal managers should take the pulse of parents. Climate surveys are commonly administered in school systems and provide important information about school culture.
- Leadership survey instruments can provide valuable information about teachers' views on principal leadership, but very few such instruments possess the psychometric properties (i.e., construct validity and reliability) to make them useful. A notable exception is VAL-ED, a recently developed survey tool that measures principal accomplishment against the ISLLC

standards. (For a description of VAL-ED, see [page 12](#).) We are eager to see examples of VAL-ED in practice, as it has the potential to be an important feature of principal evaluation. At the same time, we are concerned that VAL-ED might not adequately measure principal effectiveness as it relates to human capital management and teacher effectiveness. Further, we have some concerns about the appropriateness of VAL-ED in evaluating principals in turnaround schools, since the tool relies heavily on the input of teachers. Often, turnaround principals succeed by challenging ingrained negative adult behavior; feedback in this context might more reflect the anger common in such situations than a measured analysis of a principal's performance.

- In the few places they are available, school quality reviews provide an independent and comprehensive view of a school's condition and, by extension, the state of leadership in the building. We discuss New York City's School Quality Review process on [page 16](#) and its use in the evaluation of principals. This kind of assessment is an invaluable supplement to other sources of evidence and can be useful in documenting a principal's contribution to a school's growth over time.

- Finally, principal managers should analyze as much student performance data as is available to them, especially in grades that are not tested. This can help keep principals and their managers sharply focused on the progress of all students.

Ensuring that principal managers can be effective evaluators of principals will be difficult. For many, it represents a substantial departure from the traditional role of supervising a set of schools. Yet the success of any endeavor to improve principal effectiveness through an enhanced evaluation system depends heavily on a commitment to principal manager effectiveness.

LEAs should select principal managers based in part on their demonstrated effectiveness as principals. They should evaluate principal managers based on growth in student achievement in the schools they supervise, a set of expectations for leadership actions (similar to the expectations for principals), and improvements in the effectiveness of the principals they manage. There are a number of districts that are pursuing higher levels of accountability for principal managers based on student results, and many are doing this by lowering the number of schools overseen by each principal manager. These efforts should continue and should be expanded into robust systems of responsibility, professional growth, and accountability for principal managers.

Idea 3: Develop performance expectations that are universally high and differentiated in ways that drive continuous improvement.

Principal evaluation systems should hold very high expectations for all principals. At the same time, there are three ways in which the systems might usefully be differentiated. The first is with respect to novice principals, the second based on school level, and the third in response to a school's stage of development.

Novice Principals

Some LEAs vary the content and form of evaluation for novice principals. For example, they are often evaluated on a subset of standards, reflecting a perceived need to master certain aspects of the job before others. We support such tailoring for new principals, particularly if the areas to be evaluated are consistent with the greatest needs in their schools.

Indeed, first-year principals need distinct treatment within a system of professional growth and evaluation. They should be—and are in many districts—assigned a mentor to support their learning and development. While not their evaluator,

the mentor should provide ongoing feedback both to the principal and their manager about areas for improvement. Novice principals should especially be supported to diagnose their school's condition and develop a specific plan of action to move the school forward (see the discussion of stages of school development on [page 26](#) for more on what this entails). And finally, given the intensive learning demands on first year principals, LEAs should consider placing more weight on the accomplishment of leadership expectations and less weight on student achievement results than for other principals.

Beyond this differential approach for novice principals, no other individual characteristics merit variations in the system of principal evaluation. It is a common practice in LEAs to lengthen the cycle of evaluation for veteran principals (e.g., conducting evaluations every three years instead of annually). Though this is understandable as a way to conserve

resources, districts should exercise caution on this front. Annual evaluation can serve to maintain a focus on growth and learning. Districts should preserve, at minimum, one formal observation and feedback session for principals each year.

School Level

The jobs of a secondary school principal and of an elementary school principal, though highly similar across a range of leadership actions, do differ. For example, though highly effective elementary school principals build teams of leaders to share the responsibility for instructional leadership, they can and often do spend significant time in every teacher's classroom providing feedback and support on instructional practice. High school principals, though they may spend significant time in classrooms as well, have larger staffs teaching a wide range of subjects. It is crucial, therefore, that they have a strong leadership team to provide the necessary scale and scope of instructional leadership responsibilities.

Similar distinctions between leadership at the elementary and secondary levels crop up across multiple domains of leadership actions, but principal evaluation systems rarely appreciate these differences in the work. We recommend, therefore, that while the high-level leadership domains should remain the same for all leaders, the actions and indicators embedded in a principal evaluation system be appropriately tailored to each school level.

Stages of School Development

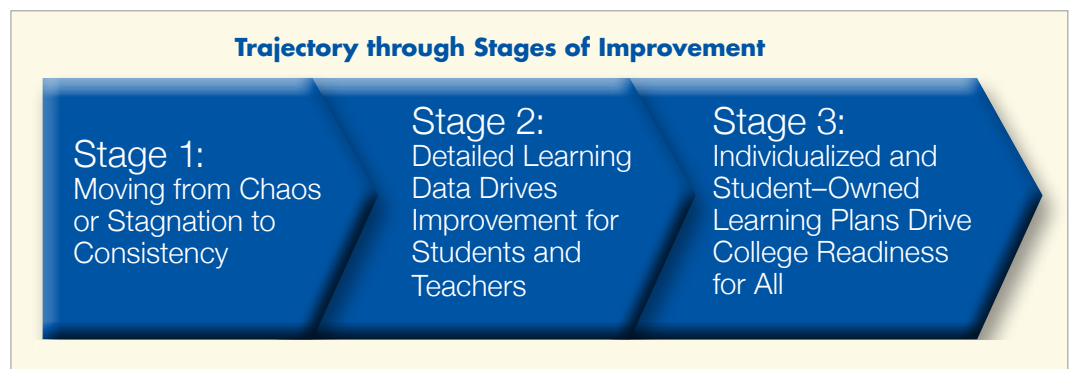
Principal evaluation systems tend to treat schools as uniform; this is problematic. Our research for the *UEF* indicates that though each school's improvement process is unique, there is a consistent developmental trajectory through which all schools must pass on their way to reaching universal college and career readiness. We divide this trajectory into three distinct *stages* of improvement (see right). In Stage 1, school practices are focused on establishing consistency in a school that has been chaotic or plagued by ineffective adult practices. Examples of Stage 1 practices include consistent

instructional strategies across classrooms and consistent code of conduct expectations and management by all adults in the building. Stage 2 school practices build on the work from Stage 1 and tend to focus on meeting the diverse individual needs of adults and students in the school, including individual development plans for teachers and a much deeper use of student-level data for instructional and resource planning. Stage 3 school practices are closely aligned to those found in the "effective schools" literature, including systems to immediately identify and support any students not yet meeting proficiency and demonstrated student understanding and ownership of their success and learning outcomes.¹³

Whichever stage a school may currently be in, it is a principal's job to take specific actions to move school-wide practices to the next level—for it is when a school's practices move from one stage to the next that students make dramatic achievement gains. Evaluation systems should mirror this understanding, differentiating to drive higher levels of performance while maintaining a universally high bar for all principals.

To illustrate, consider the case of a school in Stage 1, which is where many very low-performing schools in need of "turnaround" find themselves. Should the content of the evaluation for a principal in such a school be the same as a principal in a Stage 3 school that has built the capacity necessary to drive near universal college and career readiness for all students? There are ways in which an evaluation system should treat these principals equally, and some ways in which differentiation is useful and appropriate.

With respect to student outcomes and teacher effectiveness, the expectations should remain the same. We have seen numerous examples of principals who have made



¹³ New Leader for New Schools' 2009 paper on principal effectiveness (*Principal Effectiveness: A New Principalship to Drive Student Achievement, Teacher Effectiveness, and School Turnarounds*, available at www.nlns.org/publications) discusses the stages of school development in detail.

rapid and dramatic gains in very low-performing schools. Likewise, some of the most effective principals in a turnaround context made substantial moves to increase the effectiveness of their teaching force. Therefore, expectations for principals to demonstrate student growth and gains in teacher effectiveness should be uniform and high.

Where we should expect differentiation is in the application of the domains of leadership actions. Recalling the definitions of domains, key levers, actions, and indicators (see [page 21](#)), we would anticipate the domains and key levers to apply universally, regardless of a school's stage of development. By contrast, the indicators of a principal's success might shift substantially in a turnaround school, given the very different context and needs of such schools.

In between are principal actions, which should sometimes vary and sometimes not. Consider, for example, the actions that a principal takes to create "an environment where diversity is valued and all children thrive and achieve at high levels" (see the 3rd lever under Domain 1 in Appendix B). An exemplary principal meets all proficiency standards and goes beyond them by:

- Building staff's capacity to provide and lead supports for diverse groups in the school;
- Building the school's and community's collective capacity by initiating direct conversations about culture and diversity;
- Providing professional development and capitalizing on learning opportunities that stem from moments of cultural conflict; and
- Recognizing and integrating the learning opportunities that come from a diverse community.

These actions represent exemplary performance in schools at all stages of development, including turnaround schools.

By contrast, within the same domain, the second key lever focuses on the actions that a leader takes to "build and maintain a focus on ambitious student achievement goals for all students." An exemplary principal in a strong school meets all proficiency standards and goes beyond them by:

- Assigning members of the leadership team and master teachers to focus on specific goal areas; and
- Building staff ownership for the goal areas for which they are responsible.

In a turnaround setting, a principal often does not have an adequate store of teacher-leaders to merit the actions above. Meeting proficiency standards in this case actually represents exemplary performance, since these actions would represent a substantial leap in capacity for a turnaround school.¹⁴

In addition, LEAs should consider weighting particular standards to address data-supported priorities relevant to a school's stage of development. For example, given the primacy of developing a strong school culture as a basis for later improvement, principals in Stage 1 schools might be held more accountable for actions on this front than actions within other standards.¹⁵

¹⁴ Because of the variations in principal actions and indicators of success in turnaround schools, we would anticipate creating a "turnaround version" of the rubric.

¹⁵ There is a more general point here about the adaptability of evaluation systems. It is possible that local conditions might merit different weights on specific leadership standards. For example, as LEAs move forward with implementation of new, more complex systems of teacher evaluation, they might want principals to attend more to their roles as human capital managers. Weighting the relevant actions in a principal evaluation system would be a reasonable and appropriate way to signal this emphasis.

Idea 4: Ensure that the evaluation system is informed by principals and other experts and is adapted over time to reflect new understandings of the practices that contribute to increased student achievement.

Over time, New Leaders for New Schools has found that one of the most powerful drivers of programmatic change has been to have a robust evaluation approach that informs continuous improvement and helps us scale up the successful efforts happening across the country in New Leader-led schools. We have also found this cycle of continuous improvement helpful for state and local policy-makers. State and LEA policy is best when it is informed and driven by results on the ground.

States can and should develop effective learning cycles, gathering data about the specific principal actions and school practices of schools making dramatic gains. Such information would not only be made available to LEAs and schools to support their ongoing learning; it would also inform the design and periodic updating of principal evaluation systems.

Engaging principals, principal managers, and teachers in the design and implementation of a new principal evaluation system is an important part of this learning cycle. For one thing, they are sources of knowledge and expertise. In addition, we know that new evaluation systems call for substantial changes in practice and culture. One promising example of engaging principals and others comes from Hillsborough County, Florida, which is implementing new systems of evaluation for both teachers and principals. Even with substantial philanthropic support and with commitment from key stakeholder groups, Hillsborough recognized the need for regular and robust communication with teachers and principals as the design work unfolded. Perhaps more importantly, the district has maintained a high level of communication in the implementation phase, setting the stage for adaptations as they become necessary.¹⁶

A number of states have outlined strategies for engaging

stakeholders in the re-design of evaluation systems as part of their Race to the Top applications. Going forward, it will be important not only for states to implement these strategies in a robust fashion, but to support the ongoing involvement of stakeholders—especially principals themselves—in learning from and adapting systems based on lived experience.

As described above, principals should be evaluated on three things: the academic growth and success of their students, the effectiveness of their teachers, and the actions they take to drive dramatic improvement in their school. Taken together, these components add up to a powerful assessment of principal effectiveness. On the one hand, such an assessment puts a much-needed focus on the measurable impact that principals have on raising student achievement, both directly and through improvements in teacher effectiveness. On the other hand, it honors the idea that evaluation should fundamentally be a developmental activity. Principal managers, weighing a broad array of evidence, need to exercise their judgment about the effectiveness of their principals. And they need to act on those judgments, deploying talent where it is needed most, rewarding excellence with pay and promotion, and dismissing ineffective leaders. Designing systems that embrace these ideas will be challenging work and will require both the commitment and the participation of principals themselves. Implementing such systems will be even more challenging and will depend on states and LEAs committing to ongoing learning.

¹⁶ For more details, see <http://communication.sdhc.k12.fl.us/empoweringteachers>.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLICYMAKERS

Principal evaluation has traditionally been a local endeavor. Local schools systems are, after all, the employers of principals. States have limited their role to setting standards and providing professional development dollars. The federal government has had little involvement beyond discrete grant programs (e.g., the Teacher Incentive Fund). This relationship between levels of government is appropriate and should not fundamentally change.

However, recent efforts by the federal government are spurring changes to current practices. The Obama Administration's signature school reform initiative, Race to the Top, requires states to develop and implement new principal evaluation systems as part of a broader commitment to produce and support great teachers and leaders. In response, many states are beginning to consider more robust roles in ensuring that evaluation is used as a vehicle to improve principal effectiveness in all local school systems.

These are positive developments, especially since they can shine a light on the actions that school leaders take to improve student achievement. At the same time, they carry a risk of creating excessive bureaucracy, especially if state or federal involvement is focused on ensuring compliance with new systems. Policymakers should guard vigilantly against this risk.

At best, improved principal evaluation systems can contribute to the development of learning-centered school systems that hold everyone accountable for improving achievement. All actions by policymakers should be focused on this goal, and it is in this spirit that New Leaders for New Schools offers recommendations to policymakers at all levels of government.

Recommendations for the Federal Government

We begin with the federal government, which has recently highlighted principal effectiveness as important (through guidance for Race to the Top and the School Improvement Grant program). The federal government should continue to do so through its core policymaking vehicles, especially Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Our top recommendations for the federal government are as follows:

1. Reduce conflicting layers of accountability and ensure alignment of federal school-level and principal-level evaluation and accountability.

The federal government should dramatically reduce the

duplicative layers of accountability for schools, principals, and teachers that tend to reinforce a culture of compliance rather than one of performance and learning. Instead, the federal government should ensure consistency and alignment for all school and principal-level accountability. Therefore, the principal evaluation metrics we recommend here—especially a focus on student outcomes—should also be incorporated into revised federal policy about school-level Adequate Yearly Progress.

2. Align school accountability provisions in federal law to a new vision of principal effectiveness that includes a focus on increasing teacher effectiveness and improving student-level outcomes.

Principals are besieged with competing accountability demands that often divert their attention from the core practices that lead to increased student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Through the reauthorization of ESEA, the federal government can lead the way to a more coherent school accountability system. Congress should rewrite the definition of Adequate Yearly Progress for schools so that it is primarily focused on how well schools are increasing, year to year, the following measures: academic outcomes, including direct measures of individual student growth over time, other college readiness outcomes, and the percentage of teachers who can be objectively assessed as effective.

3. Require states, as a condition of receiving ESEA Title II funds, to adopt and implement principal evaluation systems that define principal effectiveness based on student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes (70%) and the leadership practices to accomplish those outcomes (30%).

This would send a message to LEAs about the need for a fundamental change in how we measure the success of principals. Federal guidance could also leave room for innovative measures of leadership practices such as student and teacher surveys that correlate to achievement outcomes.

Other recommendations for the federal government include the following:

4. Require states, as a condition of receiving ESEA Title II funds, to regularly publish data on principal effectiveness.

Specifically, states should track and publish on an ongoing basis the percentage of principals (statewide and for each LEA with multiple principals) that are rated as effective and ineffective. It is particularly important for states to be transparent about where the percentages of effective principals are increasing and where they are not. This will require states to develop and implement better data systems and communication tools for making the information useful and understandable to the general public.

5. Require states, as a condition of receiving ESEA Title II funds, to track the success of principal preparation and training programs in increasing principal effectiveness, and to change or close those programs that are unsuccessful in doing so.

The federal government should only be investing resources in those preparation programs that can demonstrate that high and/or increasing numbers of their graduates are effective. Armed with information from the state on the effectiveness of their graduates, all principal preparation programs should have plans for improving their outcomes. Those with poor outcomes should be held accountable for key programmatic improvements in order to maintain licensure; persistent low performance should result in the loss of licenses to certify new principals. The same logic should apply to state-funded professional development programs for principals: states need to collect the data necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of principals who receive training, continuously improve professional development programs based on the data, and modify or eliminate unsuccessful programs.

6. Set a goal for states to triple the funding in ESEA Title II for principal development.

Currently, 4% of Title II funding supports principal development activities, despite the substantial impact that effective principals have on both student achievement and teacher effectiveness. Investing in principal effectiveness is one of the most direct paths the federal government can take to improving teacher effectiveness, which is a core goal of Title II. Increasing funding for principal development would provide some of the resources necessary for states and LEAs to retool evaluation systems and upgrade the quality of preparation and professional development programs. In addition, Congress should set a goal that states devote 12% of Title II dollars to principal development tied to a new definition of principal effectiveness. States will need to be transparent about whether and how they meet this goal.

Recommendations for States

States should fundamentally view their role in terms of creating the conditions for local school systems to adopt the right kind of evaluation systems and helping local school systems build the capacity to implement them well. Our top recommendations for states are as follows:

1. Revise existing leadership standards for principals to embrace student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes and to reflect the most current research on effective principal leadership.

This recommendation demands two changes to current practice in most states: First, it identifies student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes as standards in and of themselves. This is not, as far as we know, current practice in any state. Second, it calls on states to be more precise about the leadership actions that drive student achievement. Our own analyses and current research suggest the need for greater emphasis on principal actions to improve school culture and teacher effectiveness, while other aspects of principal leadership might diminish in importance. We also urge states to consider developing and adopting performance expectations that are high for all leaders and appropriately differentiated for a school's stage of development.

2. Establish a model principal evaluation system that defines principal effectiveness based on student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes (70%) and the leadership actions to accomplish those outcomes (30%).

Student achievement and teacher effectiveness should together comprise 70% of the model system, with student achievement alone accounting for more than 50% of a principal's evaluation. The system should include the specific measures for each of these categories (i.e., the student achievement variables that will be used, the teacher effectiveness measures, and the rubric for assessing principal performance against domains of leadership actions). The state should require that LEAs either adopt the model system or create their own systems based on the same three standards and the same weights for the standards. State guidance could also leave room for innovative measures of leadership practices such as student and teacher surveys that correlate to achievement outcomes.

3. Reduce conflicting layers of accountability and ensure alignment of state accountability for individual schools and principals.

States should dramatically reduce the duplicative layers of state and local accountability for schools, principals, and teachers that tend to reinforce a culture of compliance rather than one of performance and learning. Instead, states should ensure consistency and alignment for all school- and principal-level accountability. Therefore, the principal evaluation metrics we recommend here—especially a focus on student outcomes—should also be incorporated into all revised states policies about accountability and evaluation for individual schools and principals.

4. Support ongoing improvement of principal evaluation systems through system learning and innovation.

States need to move away from a compliance orientation and toward an “action tank” orientation as they develop, implement, and learn from principal evaluation systems. There are two concrete actions that flow from this recommendation: First and foremost, states need to establish the capacity to conduct ongoing rigorous investigations of the relationship between domains of leadership actions and the most important student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes. The data generated from these investigations should inform a continuous cycle of inquiry and drive decisions about adapting principal evaluation policy over time. Some examples:

- If new and better ways of measuring student achievement come online, they should augment or even replace the ones in use now.
- Where leadership actions prove to be more or less tied to important outcomes, states should adjust the domains in the evaluation system accordingly.
- Where weak implementation of leadership practices at the local level results in poor outcomes, states should invest in and deliver technical assistance, including training of principal managers.

Second, states should be deliberate about encouraging innovative practices in principal evaluation. For example, some LEAs might receive state support to pilot the use of student feedback in principal evaluation, perhaps with lowered stakes for individuals. Learning from such pilots and from locally-developed innovations should inform ongoing changes to the state model. The actions described here are beyond the current capacity of most

state education agencies. So, in order to ensure serious attention to the system learning agenda, states should develop formal partnerships with third-party research entities and make data available to others in the research community.

Other recommendations for states include the following:

5. Increase state investments in principal development strategies that can demonstrate that they produce greater principal effectiveness.

To make new evaluation systems robust, principal managers will need to have resources to act on their observations of principals and resources for training, mentoring, and other forms of support. Current levels of investment are wholly inadequate. As noted above, only a very small portion of ESEA Title II funds for teacher *and* leader development are used to support principals. Even without federal action, states should shift Title II guidance to LEAs to encourage more investment in principals. Given the role that principals play in driving teacher effectiveness and retention, this development in principals is actually a high-leverage strategy for driving teacher quality. Further, states may need to repurpose existing principal support funds to be more focused on a strong vision of principal effectiveness. Finally, specific investments in principal development should only continue if they are shown to increase principal effectiveness over time.

6. Provide resources for local school systems to engage principals and others with relevant expertise in the development of new evaluation systems.

Whether an LEA chooses to adopt the model system in toto or adapt it to local circumstances, it needs to conduct authentic stakeholder engagement in order to generate

the kind of commitment that will sustain the effort over time. Particularly in these austere times, states should underwrite this effort on behalf of LEAs. States should also engage stakeholders deeply in the development of the model evaluation system described in the second recommendation.

7. Ensure that state labor laws, education codes, and other systems support both the implementation of rigorous evaluation systems and the consequences that flow from them.

One key issue is the implementation of assessment and accountability systems that allow for value-added measures of student growth. Further, states should ensure that their laws and regulations do not overly constrain LEAs in rewarding highly effective principals or removing ineffective principals.

8. Create flexible tools so that local school systems do not have to reinvent wheels.

This is particularly important with performance rubrics, survey instruments, and other tools that are important to gathering evidence of effectiveness. The implementation of a school quality review process would substantially improve the quality of information available as a basis for making judgments about school leaders. States could assist LEAs by creating model tools for implementation and adaptation at the local level, and by supporting consortia of smaller school systems that will likely need higher levels of technical assistance to ensure effective implementation.

Recommendations for Local School Systems

Local school systems, including school districts and networks of charter schools, should not wait for state action. Indeed, many local school systems are already developing new approaches to principal evaluation as part of a broader, more coherent strategy to increase teacher and principal effectiveness. As other LEAs contemplate following these leaders, it is critical that they effectively diagnose the conditions facing their educator workforce and put in place a comprehensive approach to addressing any identified challenges. For example, LEAs should revise policies to ensure autonomy of decision-making for principals, especially in their crucial role as school-level human capital managers (as described in the *UEF*). All of the following

recommendations are made with the expectation that they are preceded or accompanied by other reforms related to teacher and principal effectiveness. Our top recommendation is that local school systems:

1. Adopt or create both leadership standards for principals and a principal evaluation system that define principal effectiveness based on student achievement and teacher effectiveness outcomes (70%) and the leadership actions to accomplish those outcomes (30%).

Where state leadership is present (see recommendation #1 for states on [page 31](#)), LEAs can embrace the model developed at the state level and can drive innovation

around the model. Where it is not, they can model excellence. LEAs may also take a leadership role in piloting innovative measures of principal practices such as student and teacher surveys that correlate to achievement outcomes.

2. Align the evaluation of principal managers and central office staff to the new principal evaluation system. Include accountability for student outcomes, the effectiveness of any direct reports, and key work practices such as providing professional development and support.

Regardless of their role, central office staff members should be assessed based on the most important outcomes for students, the effectiveness of the people they supervise, and the work practices that contribute to these outcomes. This redefinition of accountability should start with principal managers and should be accompanied by a redefinition of their role and of the support structure for them. Principal managers are the lynchpin to effective principal evaluation systems. They need extensive training not only on calibrating their judgments about principals, but also in developing and supporting principal growth plans, as well as in succession planning. They also need a full suite of tools and a reasonable caseload of principals under their supervision. These supports should accompany new evaluation systems for principal managers that are highly aligned with principal evaluation systems.

3. Reduce conflicting layers of accountability and ensure alignment of local accountability for individual schools and principals.

LEAs should dramatically reduce the duplicative layers of accountability for schools, principals, and teachers that tend to reinforce a culture of compliance rather than one of performance and learning. Instead, school systems should ensure consistency and alignment for school and principal-level accountability (locally as well as in the interpretation and communication of federal and state requirements). Therefore, the principal evaluation metrics we recommend here—especially a focus on student outcomes—should also be incorporated into all local policies and communications about accountability and

evaluation for individual schools and principals.

Other recommendations for local school systems include the following:

4. Invest in the professional development of principals and ensure that all such investments are tied to needs surfaced through principal evaluations.

Evaluation can and must be a tool for learning and growth. Districts and their labor partners need to embrace this view of evaluation and make it real by providing new resources and re-purposing existing resources (see the recommendation on [page 30](#) regarding Title II funds) to support principals' ongoing growth and development.

5. Use principal effectiveness data to drive consequential actions for principals.

This includes the selection of principals and principal managers, the placement of principals matching effectiveness ratings to school needs, principal compensation, and the dismissal of ineffective principals. Evaluation can and should be a source of alignment and coherence at the local level.

6. Embrace a revision of principal evaluation as a key element of a learning-focused agenda for the school system.

Even the best-designed principal evaluation systems will require ongoing revision to both design and implementation processes based on lessons learned in the field and analysis of initial results. LEAs should set the expectation up front about the need for revision, and they should engage principals and other stakeholders in public revision processes. All revisions and stakeholder engagement should be done with the goals of generating a sense of urgency to boost student outcomes and educator effectiveness and of using the principal evaluation process as a central vehicle for doing so.

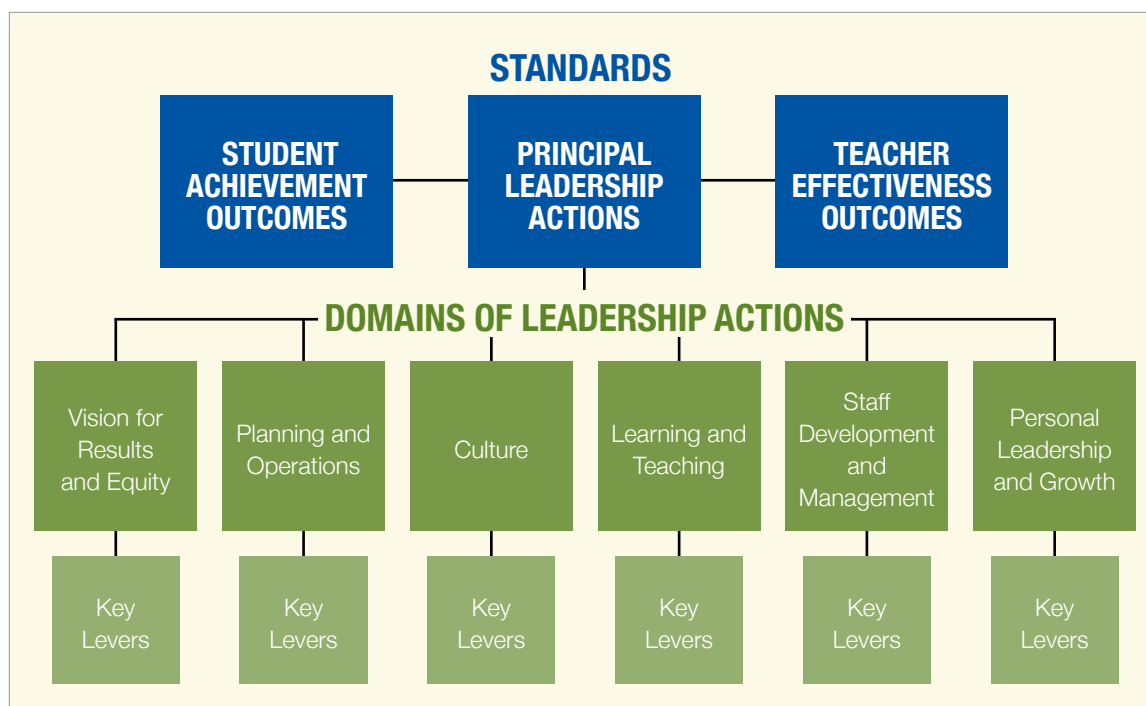
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APPENDIX A: NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS LEADERSHIP DOMAINS AND KEY LEVERS

New Leaders for New Schools proposes that principals be evaluated by three standards: (1) producing greater levels of success for all their students, (2) increasing the number and percentage of effective teachers on their staff, and (3) executing critical leadership actions that drive student achievement.

Under this last standard, we offer six *domains* of principal leadership actions that our research has shown drive dramatic school improvement. Each domain is further divided into *key levers*, or subcategories of principal actions, as illustrated below. The full list of domains and key levers is included on the following page.



Appendix A: New Leaders for New Schools Domains of Leadership Actions and Key Levers

Domain 1: Vision for Results and Equity

- Leader builds and articulates a clear shared vision and mission for high student achievement and college readiness
- Leader builds and maintains a focus on ambitious student achievement goals for all students
- Leader creates a culturally competent environment where diversity is valued and all children and adults thrive and achieve at high levels

Domain 4: Learning and Teaching

- Leader ensures the development, implementation, and evaluation of rigorous curricula tied to both state and college-readiness standards
- Leader implements consistent quality classroom routines and instructional strategies to improve student achievement
- Leader utilizes multiple forms of student-level data to drive increases in student achievement and implement student interventions

Domain 2: Planning and Operations

- Leader diagnoses the current state of the school, develops clear and focused school improvement plans and adjusts strategy based on progress
- Leader organizes school time effectively to support all instructional and staff development priorities
- Leader allocates resources effectively to support learning goals

Domain 5: Staff Development and Management

- Leader increases teacher effectiveness by recruiting, hiring, assigning, and retaining staff
- Leader increases teacher effectiveness by ensuring quality observation, feedback, coaching, and professional learning structures for teacher development
- Leader sets clear expectations for performance and manages performance of all staff
- Leader trains, develops, and supports a high-performing instructional Leadership Team

Domain 3: Culture

- Leader ensures adults and students demonstrate consistent values and positive behaviors aligned to the school's vision and mission
- Leader builds a culture of high achievement and aspiration for every student and staff
- Leader develops effective systems that support child and youth development and provide social-emotional supports
- Leader proactively engages families and communities in supporting their child's learning and the school's learning goals
- Leader implements systems and processes to ensure the active participation of adults and students in school improvement

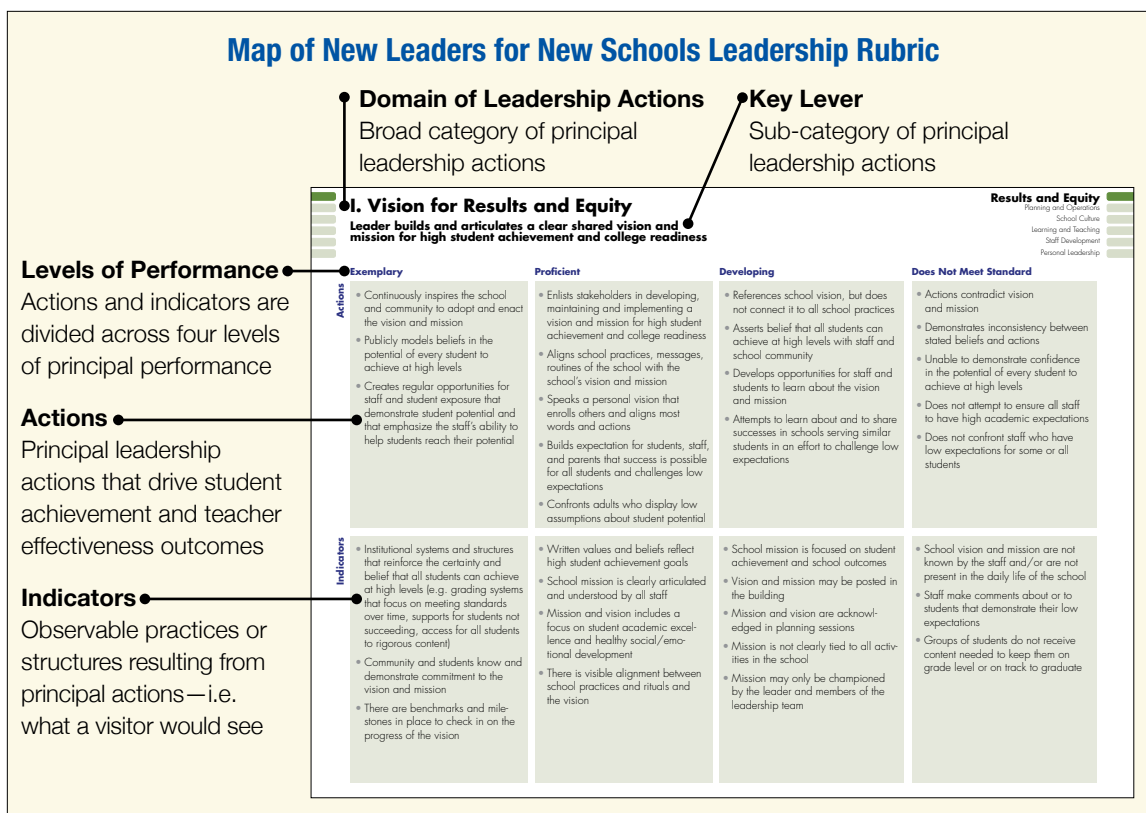
Domain 6: Personal Leadership and Growth

- Leader demonstrates self-awareness, ongoing learning, and resiliency in the service of continuous improvement of both personal and school-wide practices
- Leader proactively identifies solutions both anticipating and responding to opportunities and challenges
- Leader effectively manages change in order to improve student achievement
- Leader communicates effectively based on the situation, audience, and needs

APPENDIX B: NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS LEADERSHIP RUBRIC EXCERPTS

To assist states and LEAs with the implementation of the three standards, New Leaders for New Schools has developed a Leadership Rubric, available in full at www.nlms.org/publications.

The Leadership Rubric ensures that principals and their managers share a common understanding of the actions school leaders are expected to execute—at four distinct performance levels. As principals become more effective in taking these actions, indicators of school improvement can be observed and students make dramatic achievement gains.



Appendix B: New Leaders for New Schools Leadership Rubric Excerpt

I. Vision for Results and Equity Leader builds and articulates a clear shared vision and mission for high student achievement and college readiness		Results and Equity Planning and Operations School Culture Learning and Teaching Staff Development Personal Leadership	
Exemplary Actions	Proficient	Developing	Does Not Meet Standard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuously inspires the school and community to adopt and enact the vision and mission Publicly models beliefs in the potential of every student to achieve at high levels Creates regular opportunities for staff and student exposure that demonstrate student potential and that emphasize the staff's ability to help students reach their potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References school vision, but does not connect it to all school practices Asserts belief that all students can achieve at high levels with staff and school community Develops opportunities for staff and students to learn about the vision and mission Attempts to learn about and to share successes in schools serving similar students in an effort to challenge low expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions contradict vision and mission Demonstrates inconsistency between stated beliefs and actions Unable to demonstrate confidence in the potential of every student to achieve at high levels Does not attempt to ensure all staff to have high academic expectations Does not confront staff who have low expectations for some or all students
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional systems and structures that reinforce the certainty and belief that all students can achieve at high levels (e.g. grading systems that focus on meeting standards over time, supports for students not succeeding, access for all students to rigorous content) Community and students know and demonstrate commitment to the vision and mission There are benchmarks and milestones in place to check in on the progress of the vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School mission is focused on student achievement and school outcomes Vision and mission may be posted in the building Mission and vision are acknowledged in planning sessions Mission is not clearly tied to all activities in the school Mission may only be championed by the leader and members of the leadership team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School vision and mission are not known by the staff and/or are not present in the daily life of the school Staff make comments about or to students that demonstrate their low expectations Groups of students do not receive content needed to keep them on grade level or on track to graduate

Appendix B: New Leaders for New Schools Leadership Rubric Excerpt

<div> <div> <div>Results and Equity</div> <div>Planning and Operations</div> <div>School Culture</div> <div>Learning and Teaching</div> <div>Staff Development</div> <div>Personal Leadership</div> </div> <div> <div>V. Staff Development and Management</div> <div>Leader supports teacher effectiveness by ensuring quality observations, feedback, coaching, and professional learning structures</div> </div> </div>				
Actions	Indicators	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides regular feedback and/or has systems in place so that staff have feedback from a master teacher or member of the leadership team that is nuanced and specific to the individual Implements a system for consistent support and follow-up to gauge improvement that includes formal and informal feedback from members of the leadership team, master teachers and other school leaders Assesses or has a system in place to assess each teacher's strengths and weaknesses to determine specific supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new teachers and all teachers with specific development needs are mentored by highly skilled peers Staff share a collective awareness of individual skills and growth areas. They self-direct professional development based on student achievement outcomes Observation protocol/practice includes not only consistent schoolwide expectations but individual teacher development areas and study of specific student subgroups as identified by data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides regular feedback and/or has systems in place so that staff have feedback from a master teacher or member of the leadership team Holds teachers accountable for student learning including knowing and displaying student work and data during classroom observations and teacher debriefs Attempts to assess each teacher's strengths and weaknesses to determine supports and to differentiate supports Creates multiple structures for teacher learning including large group professional development, grade level and content teams Creates teacher teams and protocols focused on student outcomes, student data, and student work Support struggling teachers with specific improvement plans that focus on what steps they will take to improve their performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides high level feedback that is not concrete or actionable Attempts to use data in teacher meetings, but may not successfully model the use of data Shares basic planning tenets and some expectations for planning practices Provides limited supports to teacher growth Has grouped teachers into categories, but does not complete an individual assessment of teacher strength Implements some targeted supports for struggling teachers using the intensive assistance plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides irregular or no feedback to teachers Does not hold teachers accountable for student learning Does not have clear expectations for planning Does not differentiate professional development and support
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An expanded group of school leaders engage in observations and provide feedback based on a consistent set of expectations and protocol Teacher-driven professional development focuses on student learning challenges and progress toward student achievement goals and includes teacher team meetings and peer visitations All new teachers and all teachers with specific development needs are mentored by highly skilled peers Teacher teams use protocols and processes designed to guide collaboration Structures are established for jobembedded collaborative learning: Professional Learning Communities, Protected time for grade level/content area planning, Protocols for systematic examination of practice Teacher teams have deep and frequent conversations about formative student data and strategies to adjust instruction for every student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School has a clear professional development calendar of topics aligned to established school goals and the school improvement plan There is a common lesson plan structure based on an instructional framework Teacher teams review student work to build a shared understanding of curricular goals and rigor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers receive infrequent feedback Teachers do not use standard/consistent planning templates and/or include consistent elements When students do not acquire a skill the responsibility is placed on the student rather than on the instructor Professional development is general and standard for all staff



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New Leaders for New Schools is working to address the national crisis in urban public education by selecting and preparing outstanding leaders and supporting the performance of the urban public schools they lead at scale. New Leaders for New Schools has set clear goals and strategies to help schools led by New Leader Principals succeed while also supporting the success of our partner school systems and, over time, education practitioners and policymakers nationwide. Our strong focus on our mission and long-term goals is allowing New Leaders for New Schools to make a powerful contribution toward our vision that one day every student will graduate from high school ready for college, career, and citizenship.

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